



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

20th plenary meeting
Saturday, 23 September 2017, noon
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at noon.

Agenda item 8 (continued)**General debate**

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Adel Ahmed Al-Jubeir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Jubeir (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him every success. I would also like to thank Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session, for his efforts throughout his tenure.

I am very pleased to be addressing the Assembly today as my country celebrates its national holiday. We look to the past with pride and are working ambitiously towards the future. Today, I am the messenger of a State that has made its people its top priority and resolutely set forth on a path to sustainable development through creating opportunities, thanks to its fruitful partnerships with friends around the world. Under the leadership of our King, we are helping to establish peace and security in the region and around the world.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most protracted dispute in the modern history of our region

and has led to innumerable tragedies and endless human suffering. Nothing can justify its continuation, especially when there is an international consensus on the importance of reaching a two-State solution, based on internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the goal of establishing an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the pre-1967 borders. More than ever we need concerted international determination to make that solution a reality.

We have been tackling the Houthi-Saleh insurgency in Yemen as a coalition in order to help the legitimate Government of Yemen save its people and restore its State in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That was not a choice for us in Yemen. We resorted to it only after sustained political efforts to maintain Yemen's safety and stability and preserve its territorial integrity and independence. We therefore affirm our full support for the political process in Yemen and will stand by the United Nations and its Special Envoy in their efforts to arrive at a political solution in line with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) and the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative, and through national dialogue. We are aware of the extent of the humanitarian suffering of our brothers in Yemen since the coup d'état and have spared no effort to come to their aid. In fact, the assistance provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in recent years now amounts to more than \$8 billion for every area of humanitarian medical and development needs, funnelled through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

17-29807 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



My country firmly condemns and is gravely concerned about the Government of Myanmar's policy of repression and forced displacement of the Rohingya minority, which runs counter to all respect for humanitarian values and international law. It is a human tragedy that demands an urgent response and should end immediately, in line with the principles on which our Organization was founded. As we urge the Government of Myanmar to honour its obligations and protect its peoples from discrimination, we continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya. King Salman has provided \$15 million to help the displaced, in addition to my country's provision of assistance by taking in more than half a million Rohingya refugees. His Majesty has also personally intervened with neighbouring States and has been working with the Government of Bangladesh to ensure safe passage for the refugees and decent living conditions for them in the various host countries.

Today our international community is facing one of the greatest ever challenges to its security and stability, the threat of terrorism, which is striking all over the world, in defiance of all human rights and values. My country will continue to work steadfastly to counter extremism and terrorism in all their manifestations. The Arab-Islamic-American summit was held in Riyadh in May with that purpose and affirmed unequivocally the importance of pursuing joint efforts to end extremism and terrorism by cutting off their sources of financing. As it happens, the crisis in Qatar is interfering with our policies designed to combat terrorism and extremism and cut off their financing.

Meanwhile, the Syrian crisis is entering its sixth year, and the conflict has already claimed hundreds of thousands of victims. From the beginning, my country has opened its doors to hundreds of thousands of Syrians. In general, the Middle East is going through a period of unprecedented tensions and continuing crises, in which Iran has played a part.

Turning to the crisis in Qatar, we have continued with a firm policy aimed at combating the fostering of extremism and terrorism through Doha's provision of financial support to terrorism, as well as helping it to disseminate violent hate speech. Qatar has also been providing a safe haven for those who have violated the law and must be brought to justice, thereby helping to spread chaos and foment dissension. Our group of four States has demanded firmly that Qatar adhere to the principles of international law where the fight

against terrorism is concerned, including by honouring its obligations under the 2013 Riyadh Agreement and its complementary agreement of 2014, which are all legitimate demands.

In its desire to affirm the principles of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the safeguarding of the peace and security of peoples around the world, my country was one of the first to call for establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We have also demonstrated the importance we attach to the Sustainable Development Goals and their three economic, social and environmental pillars through our Vision 2030, aimed at enabling our country to achieve sustainable, people-centred development in order to build a more robust economy. And we have always striven to provide support to developing countries by providing official development assistance totalling 0.7 per cent of our gross national income.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those who are helping people everywhere, wherever they are, and who are working for peace.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Darren Allen Henfield, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Henfield (Bahamas): On behalf of the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him of my country's full support and cooperation during his tenure. I would also like to sincerely congratulate his predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson, on his stewardship of the Assembly during the seventy-first session.

The Bahamas congratulates Mr. António Guterres on his recent appointment as Secretary-General, with the daunting task of continuing the implementation of the bold and ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I commend him for the work he has done so far in steering the work of the Organization and assure him of the full support of the Bahamas.

Since 29 September 1729, when the first meeting of the Parliament of the Bahamas took place, democratic values have taken deep root throughout the archipelago. On 10 May this year, the Bahamas conducted its eleventh consecutive round of general

elections since our establishment of universal suffrage in 1962. The people of the Bahamas, in a free, peaceful and democratic process, elected a Government led by Mr. Hubert Minis. The new Administration is made up almost exclusively of new members, one of them as young as 21 years old. We promised our people bold change and we are committed to fulfilling that promise. We stand on the threshold of advancing a new agenda as demanded by our people, one that has at its core the protection and promotion of the rights, interest and welfare of all Bahamians — women, men, young people and children. I am therefore proud today to make my first address to this organ as the most recently appointed Foreign Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas under this new administration.

Economies large and small are facing very difficult times, where myriad factors challenge our capacity to create an environment where people can be assured of sustainable livelihoods, security, safety and a promising future for succeeding generations. Very troubling are the insidious increase in international terrorism; unfair practices in the international financial sector, such as de-risking and correspondent banking; crime; trafficking in persons, drugs and weapons; gross violations of human rights; and reprehensible corruption by those who have been entrusted to govern.

Of special concern to small island developing States (SIDS) are the dangers of environmental degradation and climate change, which threaten our very survivability. With what we have witnessed just recently with the passage of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and now Maria, I cannot underscore sufficiently the importance the Bahamas attaches to combating climate change and the preservation and protection of the environment. Even while these hurricanes were occurring, earthquakes took place in Mexico, resulting in further tragic loss of life and destruction. Climate change is global. We have expressed before and today we reiterate our thoughts and prayers to all adversely impacted by these devastating events.

I need to emphasize that this is the third time in three years that the Bahamas has been hit by a major hurricane, and Maria is still churning in our territory. There are two more months before the end of the hurricane season, and we can only pray that we will be spared further destruction and loss. Hurricane Irma changed course and did not directly hit the entire Bahamian archipelago, thereby minimizing the impact on our tourism industry. However, we were not entirely

spared. Our southern islands experienced serious damage. Ragged Island was totally devastated and is now uninhabitable. Additionally, tornadoes inflicted considerable damage on the northern islands of Bimini and Grand Bahama.

We are grateful to our international partners, which provided immediate support after the passage of Hurricane Irma and now continue to stand by our side as we begin the painful and burdensome process of restoration and rebuilding. I commend the President and the Secretary-General for convening the recent high-level meeting to allow those of us impacted to bring focus on these events to our other partners.

One of the countries immediately affected by Hurricane Irma was the Republic of Cuba, which, as on previous occasions, caused this massive hurricane to lose some of its energy and probably lessened its impact on our neighbour, the United States of America. All developing countries affected have been placed on a short list for assistance to shore up their internal conditions towards recovery. Cuba does not enjoy this capacity to the fullest. The Bahamas joins other nations in calling for the United States Congress to reconsider the legislative barriers to the biggest of the Caribbean islands in order for it to develop to its fullest potential as a member of the international community.

It is the intention of the Government, working with the private sector, to create out of the destruction of Ragged Island the first fully green island in the region, utilizing renewable energy and smart technologies, from solar energy to sustainable water-purification systems, to create a more sustainable and resilient island community.

The implications for the existence of SIDS such as the Bahamas, as we are confronted with global warming, rising sea-levels, more severe and frequent hurricanes and other extreme weather events, are all too clear. For the first time in its history, the Bahamas evacuated whole communities to safe quadrants ahead of Hurricane Irma. What happens next — a wholesale evacuation of the entire Caribbean? I call on the international community to recognize the imperative of accelerating efforts to deal urgently with the adverse impact of climate change, and to do so in a coordinated way. Only then will we mitigate against these ferocious and frequent destructive weather events, which now potentially threaten to add to the world's migration issues.

Well over two decades ago, my Government, recognizing the very real threat posed to our very existence, upgraded its human capital capacity to address the unintended consequences of climate change and its commitment to environmental conservation. Through its many marine protected areas, the Bahamas is committed to the conservation of sustainable oceans, as well as through our active involvement in initiatives, such as the 10x20 initiative, and our participation in the consultative process of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. In this context, the Bahamas has presented its candidature once again for a seat on the Council of the International Maritime Organization in category C.

The continuing imperative for us in the Bahamas and the Caribbean is the re-evaluation of the measurements used to determine economic well-being. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its policy brief on vulnerability and debt in small States, recognized that many SIDS face an uncertain future. The Bahamas continues to dispute the use of per capita gross domestic product/gross national product as an instrument to measure wealth and economic development. The use of this one-dimensional instrument prohibits countries that are most in need from receiving development assistance or loans at concessional rates. It is time for us to replace that metric with a realistic measurement that takes into account the vulnerability and fragility of SIDS to exogenous shocks.

Notwithstanding our best efforts at self-sufficiency, exogenous shocks in the form of reduced correspondent banking relationships continue to create challenges for the region. International banking institutions, fearing that they may be subject to fines and sanctions related to the illicit activities of money-laundering and terrorist financing, have pulled out en masse. Citizens in our region depend on the services provided by these entities and have now become severely disadvantaged as a result of the actions taken. This threatens our ability to remain competitive as one of the leading international centres and hinders our efforts to expand our trading relations.

The head of the IMF, Ms. Christine Lagarde, spoke convincingly in 2016 on the subject of correspondent banking, highlighting that all stakeholders had to uphold their end of the bargain. For its part, the Bahamas has invested in a strong compliance regime, at great financial cost. We invite the international community to work together to find another way to deal with the

issue and allow input from those to be impacted by their decisions before moving the goal post yet again.

Despite the challenges faced, the Government of the Bahamas remains committed to a comprehensive development agenda for the country. With the launch of the national development plan Vision 2040 in the coming months, we will set a course towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this connection, the Bahamas has committed to participating in the voluntary national review process at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, in 2018. We appreciate the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in this regard. Indeed, it is through this anticipated integrated framework that we shall address the range of challenges that face our nation.

The scourges of terrorism and trafficking in arms of all types continue to impact our way of life. The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to standing with the international community in the fight against terrorism in all its forms. We also stand in solidarity with the peoples of France, Spain, Belgium and the United Kingdom, who have recently experienced horrific terrorist attacks. Violence in the furtherance of political aims is never the answer. Only through dialogue and negotiations will aspirations be realized.

I spoke earlier about the importance of accountability, truth and transparency in Government and the importance of the rule of law to good governance. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,

"Corruption is a global phenomenon found in all countries — but evidence shows it harms poor people more than others, stifles economic growth and diverts desperately needed funds from education, health care and other public services. An estimated \$1 trillion get siphoned off through bribes every year, according to the World Bank."

The Government of the Bahamas has firmly committed itself to eradicating criminality and corruption. We are resolved to have in place an efficient, results-based public sector, with an Office of the Ombudsman, in order to create the best environment possible for promoting economic development, foreign

direct investment, small business development and equal opportunity for all to share in prosperity.

The role of the United Nations in advancing human rights has been essential. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a series of international instruments, human rights operations on the ground and the various human rights bodies, such as the Human Rights Council, permit the United Nations to continue as a beacon to promote and protect human rights through both immediate and long-term action.

We in the Bahamas are committed to protecting and promoting the rights of Bahamians and, indeed, all humankind. The achievements of the Bahamas relative to human rights have derived from collaboration with all stakeholders and a willingness to explore fresh approaches to long-standing challenges. Within that context, I am pleased to announce that the Bahamas is seeking election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019-2021. As a member of the Council and a small island developing State, the Bahamas will bring to that body a fresh, distinct and constructive perspective, with the potential to add depth and richness to human rights advancement and discourse.

The Government of the Bahamas believes that education must be at the heart of driving sustainable development, where we build resilience and an educated, inclusive and diverse workforce and community. That has positive implications for the creativity, innovation and productivity that allow learners and young people to fulfil their potential to act as agents of social change. For that reason, our Government has designed an education agenda that encourages life-long learning and recognizes the potential of technology and digital platforms to serve as tools in the teaching and learning process.

I take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the Assembly the fact that the Bahamas, in recognition of the invaluable role of technology and communications in education and all aspects of development, has presented its candidature for a seat on the Council of the International Telecommunication Union.

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016 by the General Assembly, called for the development of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. We commend the ongoing work in preparation for the global compact. While recognizing the potential yields of global migration relative to the reduction of

poverty and global inequality, we believe that proper cooperation, through the appropriate mechanisms, can help to ensure that migration occurs through safe and regulated channels, to the benefit of all countries involved.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the targets to be achieved with respect to non-communicable diseases and the need to mobilize the necessary financing. We also recognize the successes experienced in the global AIDS response, and caution the international community, at this important juncture, to resist complacency and continue to offer support to achieve targets and to sustain the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS.

The Bahamas supports the work of peacekeeping operations and the Department under which they fall as a fundamental instrument to build, protect and maintain peace and security within the United Nations.

We note the approach of the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. As was the case with MINUSTAH, the Bahamas looks forward to doing its part to support Haiti's continued national development. We also join the continued support and engagement of the international community in Haiti.

During the main session, the General Assembly will consider and approve the programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019. It is our expectation that the General Assembly will, in a transparent and constructive manner, approve a budget that aligns with the mandates and activities of the United Nations. We welcome the Secretary-General's initial efforts to promote management reform aimed at strengthening service delivery. We encourage the Secretary-General, in the execution of the budget, to continue to find innovative means to advance an efficient implementation of mandates, but without arbitrary cuts.

The Bahamas values the role of the United Nations as the custodian of the interests of the world's people, in particular the poor and the vulnerable. We believe that the Charter of the United Nations remains a viable and firm foundation onto which global peace and security, social progress and economic development can be built.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alan Peter Cayetano, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Cayetano (Philippines): Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. The path to peace must be walked with patience. In order to achieve any purpose with others, be they Powers or people, patience is needed. The opposite of patience is impatience, which is the cause and aggravation of conflict.

Someone said that to jaw-jaw is better than to war-war. Listening is even better than talking. We must listen to others more than we listen to ourselves. Hopefully, we know what we are talking about, but others may know what we do not. We can learn only if we stop talking and listen. We may think that we know how others can do things better than they themselves have done it. Maybe our way is more efficient. But the time gained by that efficiency will be time lost convincing others that our way is better, rather than reaching a compromise between our way and theirs.

Real change in the world order necessitates cooperation. Nothing affecting others can be undertaken without their willing involvement and getting their agreement on the purpose and manner of the change. Achieving a shared purpose beyond any single person's ability requires cooperation. But how else can we get cooperation, if not with the patience to explain why it is needed and the equal patience to listen? That is why we have the United Nations, the largest cooperative endeavour in human history. We use the United Nations to speak out, but more importantly to listen. And somehow, we arrive at a consensus or at the very least a *modus vivendi* on how to proceed in peace and, therefore, with greater prospects for progress.

The theme for this year's session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", captures a promise that everyone who has stood here has vowed to fulfil for his or her own people, as well as for the rest of the peoples of the United Nations, as the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations puts it. Yet, after 72 years, while much has been achieved, much more has to be done. The promise is still very much a work in progress. We, the peoples of the United Nations, battle new threats that undermine the success that we have achieved and frustrate progress in peace, development and human rights — the three pillars of the United Nations.

The theme mirrors the Philippines' own people-centred agenda, as articulated by our President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. President Duterte and the Filipino people

are committed to real change in order to finally carry out long-needed reforms, address long-ignored national threats and protect the human rights of all Filipinos while doing our part to attain regional peace and stability. We remain true to our obligations under the international treaties we have ratified. We have made many sacrifices as a nation and as a people, and we shall continue to do so for peace and prosperity.

The Philippines integrates the human rights agenda into its development initiatives for the purpose of protecting everyone, especially the most vulnerable — families, women and children, the poor, indigenous people, migrant workers, the elderly and persons with disabilities — from lawlessness, violence and anarchy. That is why we have a massive campaign to restore the rule of law by fighting corruption, crime and illegal drugs. We owe it to the 10 million Filipinos working overseas to keep their children and families safe. We owe it to all Filipino families and other States with nationals living in our country to keep the Philippines safe. The very principle of the responsibility to protect must encompass, first and foremost, the vast majority of peaceful, law-abiding people who need protection from those who are not. It is for their safety and sustenance that States exist, and for which Governments and leaders are responsible.

President Duterte said the fewest words and made the fewest promises in the campaign. Why? Because he listened. He listened and he heard what none of the other candidates would listen to. The vast majority of the Filipino people felt vulnerable in their lives and livelihoods, and unsafe in the rising drug-driven criminality that threatened those least able to protect themselves. These people whom past Governments had least protected are the poor and ordinary folk.

The Philippines' comprehensive campaign against illegal drugs is a necessary instrument to preserve and protect the human rights of all Filipinos. It is never an instrument to violate the human rights of any individual or group. It was noted by President Trump in this Hall that

"we do expect all nations to uphold the two core sovereign duties to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation" (A/72/PV.3, p. 10).

This is as true in bilateral relations between sovereign countries as when they combine multilaterally on a common decision or action. The Philippines is a

sovereign country; indeed, it was the first subject nation to win its independence, however short-lived, thereby earning the honour of being the first republic in Asia.

We expect our sovereignty to be respected and our democratically elected Government's assessment of threats and how to go about addressing them to be accorded pre-eminence among nations. Is it too much to ask for the benefit of the doubt, at the very least? We prize sovereignty in all its aspects. We acknowledge the wisdom embodied in the words spoken by President Trump in this Hall: "All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens" (*ibid.*, p. 11). In keeping with that obligation, it is the State's duty to protect human life, human dignity, and human rights from aggression by other States, terrorism from non-State actors and the destruction of societies and families from criminal networks trafficking in drugs, people and arms.

As a responsible leader, the President of the Philippines launched a vigorous campaign against the illegal drug trade to save lives, preserve families, protect communities and stop the country from becoming a narco-State — an epidemic would spell the end of sovereignty in any meaningful sense. As of August 2017, the drug trade had penetrated at least 24,848 barangays, representing 59 per cent of the 42,036 smallest Government units spanning our archipelago — those directly in touch with our people. It is estimated that 4 to 7 million people have used or are becoming dependent on drugs. Where is sovereignty in a country where vast numbers are addicted to drugs and enslaved by their suppliers?

To be sure, drug addiction calls for cure and not chastisement. When the President showed his fierce determination to end the drug menace, 1.3 million drug users turned themselves in. Their constitutional rights were fully respected, and those who wanted a cure or rehabilitation were offered such options. But the neglect of the drug problem by previous Governments has left the current one hard-pressed to rehabilitate them all. We are grateful that generous souls at home and abroad are building centres around the country, and we sincerely thank them.

While drug addiction calls for rehabilitation, drug trafficking surely calls for stern measures, though always consistent with the rule of law. The President has and will always have zero tolerance for abusive

police officers, as time will show — I repeat, our President has zero tolerance for any type of abuse, be it drug abuse, abuse of human rights, abuse of our laws or abuse by State actors, including our policemen.

But accusations before investigation do not constitute proof, nor are they fair. Abuses have occurred and mistakes have been made — tragic ones, for sure. While one abuse is one too many, still there are far fewer abuses than the imaginary numbers claimed by partisan accusers and publicity-seekers. The drug trade has even penetrated law enforcement and our courts, and yet the message we receive is that the best way to prevent abuse in the anti-drug campaign is to stop the campaign and live with drugs instead.

But we cannot live with drugs, because drugs will not let us live. Headlines today depict human rights abuse, but what about the headlines from yesterday, or last week? Two-year-olds, 4-year-olds and 6-year-olds were raped; mothers sold their children to feed their drug addictions; and children shot their parents because they believed them to be the devil.

The problem is that the West sometimes thinks that the kind of drugs that are present in its societies — heroin, cocaine and marijuana — are the same drugs that we are talking about. We are talking about methamphetamine hydrochloride, otherwise known as shabu, which both the United Nations and the World Health Organization have said is associated with violence and paranoia. With cocaine, heroin and marijuana, the drug war is among the suppliers, but with methamphetamines, the war is within the family and every family affected by these drugs is a victim.

We can no more live with drugs than we can with terrorism which, as the United Nations admits — and as we have discovered — is funded by the drug trade. This has created the new phenomenon of criminal insurgency. In the century before last, a huge and well-populated Asian country was enslaved by a maritime Power that flooded it with drugs. We welcome this opportunity to address the international community's concerns and correct the perceptions gleaned from media reports that deny the real scale of the problem, as if denial were a solution. The problem is huge and we will not reduce it in our imagination because we dare not face it in reality.

Appeasement emboldens evil. We counsel patience, but delay will make the problem bigger until it is

beyond containment and control. Indeed, as we heard from President Trump in this Hall,

"When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength" (*ibid.*).

We will not slide down the slope of complacency in wilful ignorance of the threat posed to our country and our people by the drug trade.

In the past four years, we have seen the rise of the Islamic State and how it has spread its nihilistic ideology beyond Iraq and Syria to become a serious threat to the whole world. We should have no illusions that the threat posed by the Islamic State will end with the collapse of its self-proclaimed caliphate in Iraq, and very soon in Syria. Rather, we should all be ready to confront a very potent threat that has spread to other parts of the world.

In the Philippines, we have discovered the intimate and symbiotic relationship between terrorism, poverty and the illegal drug trade. Terrorists were somehow able to bring together an assortment of extremists, criminals, mercenaries and foreign fighters who attempted, but failed, to take over the great city of Marawi. That was part of their grand plan to establish in South-East Asia an extension or province of their shattered caliphate in the Middle East.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines shall regain full control of Marawi from the Islamic State-inspired terrorists. Their protracted hold of their remaining several square metres of the city is largely a result of superior arms that were illegally obtained and the presence of civilian hostages, used by them as human shields. There is also the Government's forbearance to unleash greater force in order to avoid collateral loss of life. The fight has been terrible, but the effort has been patient and careful to spare the innocent. There has been less talk and more listening to those with the most at stake in the struggle — the people of Marawi. The disturbance will soon be over and the rebuilding of Marawi will begin shortly.

Terrorism is a global problem that no country can tackle alone, although here at the United Nations it has been noted with some admiration that Filipino families outside the conflict zone quickly absorbed most of the 200,000 displaced civilians. Our main disaster preparedness is Filipino compassion. The Filipino family system is strong, the *bayanihan* system is alive,

and cooperation is a tradition of the Philippines. Help from fellow Filipinos is always at hand. While the main burden is borne by our Government and people and all the risks are taken by our soldiers, we are thankful for the assistance extended to us by the international community. From the bottom of my heart, I thank all who have helped, are continuing to help and have promised help. I thank those dear friends for helping when we needed it most.

The Philippines welcomes the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to bring together, as a cohesive whole, the work of Member States and the United Nations on counter-terrorism. It will be a sharing of experience and sober reflection rather than of blind anxieties. That is where real results will be achieved. As a founding Member of the United Nations, the Philippines has been a strong advocate of the rule of law. We uphold the core of the United Nations mission to draw upon the strength and sovereign equality of its Members to achieve their common goals.

Centuries ago, ambitions to take land resulted in long and terrible wars. The battle has shifted to the seas; hence the need to affirm our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the international law governing the rights and responsibilities of States parties in their use of the world's oceans. The issues — including territorial claims, sovereignty rights, security, and the protection of marine life and resources, to name a few — are undoubtedly numerous, intertwined and complex.

Dialogue, building trust and promoting cooperation are the way forward in addressing maritime disputes. This year, as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines looks forward to successful negotiations on the long-overdue code of conduct in the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea. We fully thank our ASEAN neighbours, the individual ASEAN States and China for their utmost cooperation in that endeavour. Again, in this work, it is essential to have patience, to listen and to be willing to work with, rather than against, each other.

We live in a global community, and we are citizens of the world. Today, our social contract is no longer confined to our nation State. In our region, we exert efforts to build bridges and not walls; to emphasize commonalities and not differences; to think less that we are Filipinos, Thai, Indonesian, Japanese, Koreans or Chinese, and to think more of ourselves as Asian.

Beyond being Asians, we are global citizens — the people of the United Nations.

Human rights and the dignity of every person are the main pillars of the United Nations and of the Philippines, too. As a very spiritual people, we are united in believing that man and woman were created in God's image. There can be no compromise of human rights for those who break the law, nor for those who are their victims. We also believe in accountability, especially in the practical conviction that as we sow, so shall we reap.

We should never tolerate human rights abuses, but neither should we tolerate misinformation or fake news on or the politicization of human rights, as those undermine our collective efforts as the United Nations to uphold the universality of human rights and dignity of human life. But why debate security versus human rights? Security and human rights are not incompatible. Indeed, the former is our duty to the latter. Without security, the most basic human rights to life and safety are constantly under attack from terrorism, criminality, drug trafficking and human trafficking.

Much has been said about ASEAN, which is identified with words such as cooperation, consultation and consensus. Critics have remarked on the slowness of ASEAN's way of proceeding. Yet, as slow as ASEAN's progress has been, it has been solid, substantive and irreversible, precisely because of the patience with which it is made. It is thereby proving to be a consensus-based organization that is working, and working well.

Five decades ago, South-East Asia was marred by conflicts, and all previous attempts at South-East Asian regionalism proved extremely difficult, if not impossible for some. Our different cultures, differing ideologies and different political systems only reinforced that pessimistic outlook. Fifty years later, the ASEAN miracle prevails with greater political and economic prospects that have gripped global interest. ASEAN has overcome the divisions, fears and hostilities of the past. We have used regional cooperation to promote growth, development, integration and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Today, the Philippines patiently builds stronger relationships with the international community through ASEAN and the United Nations. We remain a friend to all and an enemy to none. We are here to bridge and build a more peaceful, secure and stable world. There is no development without peace and no peace

without development. That is what the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides for. It serves as the template of the Philippines development plan, called *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, or *Our Ambition 2040*.

While the Philippines has experienced unprecedented economic growth, we are adopting measures to make growth more inclusive through massive poverty-alleviation programmes that are creating more jobs, driving innovation and making quality education universally available — relevant education that imparts training and skill-building to make people resilient in changing markets, building greater trust in Government and hopes for raising tens of millions of Filipinos from poverty.

There is a link between increasing poverty, corruption and a deteriorating environment. President Rodrigo Roa Duterte seeks to reverse that linkage by addressing the adverse effects of climate change — to which the Philippines is most vulnerable — through disaster-risk reduction and the strict implementation of laws protecting the environment. He is equally decisive on abuses that damage our environment.

To honour the immense sacrifices of our 10 million Filipinos abroad, and all other migrant workers of the world who make huge sacrifices so that their families may have a better life, we press on with our advocacy for a global compact on migration. As we seek to improve conditions for foreign nationals living and working in the Philippines, we advocate the fundamental concept of loving our neighbour as we love ourselves. We call on the United Nations to elevate migration on its agenda.

If we listen to each other, we will hear the same thing. We have no need for nuclear weapons. Again, we have no need for nuclear weapons. There is absolutely no benefit to another Cold War or to an arms race. We want nuclear weapons to be a thing of the past, and we do not want an arms race in any part of the world.

On 7 July, the Philippines joined 121 other Member States in securing our world from weapons of mass destruction by adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Three days ago, I had the privilege of signing the Treaty on behalf of the Philippines. The Philippines calls on Member States with nuclear weapons to likewise sign on in order to find a way to provide the world with security without the threat of mass destruction. We can have a safe world only if we get rid of all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. By doing so, we shall save succeeding

generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.

The Philippines, on its own and as this year's Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has expressed its grave concern over the growing tensions on the Korean peninsula because of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile test launches and detonations. The Philippines joins the call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to put a stop to its provocations, which bring us closer to an unimaginable scenario — a war to end all wars because no one will be left to fight new ones.

Let me end where I began, and call again for patience, listening and cooperation, focused always on the well-being of, as stated in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, "We, the peoples of the United Nations". Let us listen to each other as we all are the people of the United Nations. Our faith and destiny as human beings on this planet are intertwined.

In a situation like the present, where every finger in and around the Korean peninsula is on a trigger and every eye is on the lookout for a wrong move, the likelihood of a surprise attack is virtually zero. In that context, no one can be caught by surprise and unprepared to strike back. So what is there to lose by going on talking and listening until the very last moment, in the hope that a resolution will be found?

Patience, listening as much as talking, and cooperation among friends and even enemies are the signposts on the path of peace. Peace is about people. No people and no country can have a national identity if there are no others that can tell the difference. Without people — each one different, yet all the same in their being and in the good they seek — it is impossible to imagine the world. To utter the phrase "the world" means a planet with many peoples sharing it.

All of us are pieces of a giant puzzle. We seek to be completed by being pieced together, thereby creating a whole, beautiful picture. In a war of all against all, of every one against the other, the last man standing is not at peace; rather, he is simply a single piece. He is not the victor; he is simply alone.

I congratulate the President on his election, and he can count on the support of the Philippines.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Balakrishnan (Singapore): I am honoured to speak here on behalf of one of the world's smallest city States, the Republic of Singapore. First, I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji on his successful leadership as President at the seventy-first session.

We are meeting at a time of great uncertainty. The old fault lines of race, language and religion remain active. There is renewed anxiety about jobs and inequality. New technologies and non-State actors are challenging the international order. Terrorist groups are using the Internet to spread their poisonous, radical ideologies, including in South-East Asia. Cyberattacks and fake news have proliferated. Conflicts in many regions of the world remain and new ones have emerged.

In North-East Asia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's reckless actions are raising tensions on the Korean peninsula. Singapore strongly condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile and nuclear-weapon tests, which are in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to avoid further provocations and to fully implement all of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

In Myanmar's Rakhine state, a humanitarian disaster has occurred in the aftermath of a terrorist attack on 25 August and related acts of violence. It is a complex, intercommunal issue with deep historical roots, and it will not be solved instantly. It is the responsibility of every Government to protect every civilian, regardless of ethnicity, religious beliefs or origin. I visited Nay Pyi Taw last week and had a very frank discussion with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She is deeply troubled by what is happening in her own country and deeply distressed by the pain and suffering there.

Extremists everywhere actually have a common playbook. First, they commit an egregious act of violence. Secondly, they stick a religious label on the situation in order to convey a sense of "us versus them". Thirdly, they eliminate the grey zone of moderates by causing alienation due to overreaction. And so, we must be very careful that we do not fall into the trap of those extremists. As a doctor, I believe that the first rule of medicine is to do no harm. Therefore, as the rest of the world looks on with distress and alarm, we need to be very careful and measured in our response.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers will be meeting later today. ASEAN supports Myanmar in seeking a long-term solution to restore stability within its own borders. Singapore will work through ASEAN and with Myanmar to extend humanitarian assistance to all affected communities.

Every country actually seeks to achieve the same thing — to ensure the security and prosperity of our people and to create a better future for our children. But no country, no matter how wealthy, big or powerful, can achieve that alone. Multilateralism, international law, constructive interdependence and a sense of win-win cooperation are crucial to the sustainable development and prosperity for all countries. Therefore, a strong multilateral system reinforces the resilience of individual countries. This is particularly true for small States because we depend on a rules-based multilateral system for our survival and our success.

Today, I want to speak, first, on the importance of multilateralism; secondly, on having an open global architecture; and thirdly, on having inclusive economic growth.

My first point is on a universal, rules-based multilateral system and why it is essential if we are to solve the complex problems facing the world today. No nation can solve transboundary problems alone. We need to work with each other, we need to build consensus and we need to find effective solutions to global problems. The United Nations plays a critical role in that regard as a platform for cooperation, based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit and international law. In fact, the United Nations is the universal body best placed to address the problems of the global commons. A good example is the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, which is an enduring testament to what collective political will can achieve. Today, UNCLOS has become a constitution that governs the use of the oceans.

The recent adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development showed that multilateralism can respond to new challenges, especially when there is political will and collective commitment. When dealing with global issues such as climate change, there is no alternative to a multilateral approach. The United Nations must also deal with emerging global

challenges, such as cybersecurity, counter-terrorism and the economic disruption caused by the emergence of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and the potential for genetic engineering.

If the United Nations is to remain effective and relevant, it must also become fit for purpose. There is much scope to optimize synergies and minimize inefficiencies within the United Nations system. In this regard, Singapore strongly supports the Secretary-General's efforts to reform and restructure the United Nations. We welcome his management reforms and his efforts to review the United Nations development system so as to streamline the peace and security architecture.

As a small State, Singapore has always been a strong supporter of an effective United Nations. This year, we are proud that the Forum of Small States, founded by Singapore in 1992, celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. Singapore is committed to working closely with all States, especially small States, to support the work of the United Nations and to enhance its effectiveness. Regional organizations are also an important part of an effective multilateral, rules-based system. They help to reinforce the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to underpin international law at the regional and local levels. Equally important, they help to build confidence and encourage habits of cooperation.

In South-East Asia, ASEAN is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. ASEAN has not only fostered regional economic integration, but perhaps even more important, it has secured regional peace for five decades and strengthened the national resilience of each of its members by creating a sense of common identity in the midst of great diversity. The prospects for ASEAN are very bright, and we have ambitious plans to do more, under our vision of a united, resilient and innovative ASEAN.

My second and related point concerns the need for an open global architecture that is essential for growth and sustainable development. We have to make a choice. One model is a world divided by rival blocs, running mercantilist economies, waging proxy wars and engaging in zero-sum competition. There is another model — one where there is a vision of a world with open, interdependent, sovereign States characterized by enlightened long-term national interests, win-win collaboration and sustainable development.

It should come as no surprise that Singapore, almost by definition, has to support the latter model. We believe that an open, rules-based, multilateral system allows every country to fulfil its potential and its duty to its citizens. In particular, it allows small States, which are dependent on international trade and investments, to create a pathway for growth and resilience. It is therefore important, especially at this time, to remain steadfast in the face of growing cause for rising protectionism.

An open trading environment has allowed developing countries to export their goods and services and raised hundreds of millions of people from poverty into a new, rising middle class. Equally important, this rise of a prosperous middle class across Asia, Africa and South America has also been associated with peace and stability. The World Trade Organization is indispensable, as it underpins the rules-based multilateral trading system and provides a framework for resolving trade disputes.

The Group of Twenty (G-20) is another important platform for discussing global macroeconomic and financial issues. However, it is important for the G-20 to work closely with the United Nations and with non-members of the G-20 in order to strengthen the multilateral system and to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We welcome the efforts of successive G-20 Presidents to reach out to non-members, in particular members of the Global Governance Group. The Group will continue to be an advocate for a more accountable and inclusive framework of global governance.

My third and final point is on the need for inclusive economic growth. Politically, the consensus for multilateralism and an open global architecture will not be sustained if people within our own States feel that they are going to be left behind. In other words, we need to make sure that there is inclusive economic growth that lifts all communities together. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda is fundamentally a vision for achieving long-term inclusive economic growth, not just at the national level, but at the regional and global levels as well. It is a vision shared by all countries. However, the challenge for every Government is to generate higher growth and to create more jobs while ensuring that no one is left behind.

In Singapore, quite frankly, we believe firmly in the role of hard work, savings and self-reliance. However,

we also believe in taking care of the weak and vulnerable in every segment of our society. Consequently, our policies on women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities are designed to protect and uplift the most vulnerable. We place great emphasis on racial and religious harmony and in building social cohesiveness.

Beyond resilience, successful societies have to embrace new technologies and encourage innovation. The digital revolution is fundamentally changing the way we live, work, play, communicate, mobilize and organize our societies. We cannot wish away those disruptive changes. Instead, we have to restructure our economies and our societies, so that we can create new, better jobs for our people in this new digital world. However, that will not be an easy task; it does not come about because of a speech or two.

The transformation caused by the digital revolution will be positive only if we can find ways to share the benefits more widely and to reduce inequality. It is worth remembering that at the beginning of every industrial or technological revolution there is often a period of widening inequality, because the people or the countries who experience it first have an enormous advantage. It takes time for new tools and technologies to be democratized and commoditized so that a new middle class arises, bringing in a new golden age. We need to do the same with this new revolution. That is why we in Singapore have invested heavily in education and skills, training our people, both young and old, to give everyone a chance to maximize opportunities and to harvest new potential from this new digital revolution. We want every Singaporean to have a stake in our growth and to share in our success as a nation.

Let me conclude by saying that the United Nations is absolutely essential, particularly for small States such as Singapore. The United Nations has been a catalyst for peace and development for more than 70 years. It has given a young State like Singapore, just 52 years old, enormous opportunities for amazing progress over the past five decades. It has made a real difference to the lives of people around the world.

In an environment of increased uncertainties, the case for multilateralism becomes stronger, not weaker. Now more than ever, we need the United Nations to help us find solutions to difficult, complex problems, global and local. We need to safeguard and strengthen our multilateral, rules-based system so that even the smallest State can survive and thrive as an independent,

sovereign nation. We need an open global architecture based on a vision of an interdependent world in order to secure, sustainable prosperity for every single one of us. But most important, we need inclusive and fair economic growth to empower all our people to lead good and meaningful lives.

The Acting President: I now call on his Excellency Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Sheikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, I wish to wholeheartedly congratulate Mr. Lajčák and his friendly country, Slovakia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its current session and to pledge our full cooperation in the discharge of the duties with which he is entrusted. We are fully confident that, thanks to his insight and clear vision, he will successfully conduct the business of this session. I also wish to praise his choice of theme for this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". This important theme meets the expectations of all countries and peoples. I also take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, for his able and competent presidency of the previous session.

I renew my congratulations to Secretary-General António Guterres and applaud his tireless efforts, as reflected in his important report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1), in which he demonstrates his resolve to reform its structure and management, enhance its role in the consolidation of international peace and security, and support sustainable development in response to the challenges and changing circumstances confronting us. In that connection, I also applaud the efforts of His Excellency President Donald Trump of the United States of America to support the reform of the United Nations. The Kingdom of Bahrain was among the first countries to sign the political declaration he initiated in support of the Secretary-General's reform plan for the United Nations.

I would be remiss if I did not express the Kingdom of Bahrain's heartfelt condolences to the United States of America, Mexico and the Caribbean nations and their peoples on the natural disasters to which they have been subjected and which caused numerous fatalities and material damage. I reiterate our solidarity with them and pray that they will soon recover from their impact.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain; His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister; and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, the Kingdom of Bahrain remains faithful to its consistent policy of enhancing partnerships with the United Nations and its various bodies in expression of its firm belief in the role that our Organization is playing to achieve a more stable and prosperous world.

Accordingly, this year has witnessed numerous initiatives for fruitful cooperation, notably the launching of the King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at consolidating the efforts of governmental and private entities to enhance the contribution of young people to the sustainable development process.

In March, the Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Global Award for Women's Empowerment was officially launched. That award, named after the wife of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women, is in full conformity with the objectives of the United Nations in enhancing the role of women in development. It also reflects the pioneering experience of Bahraini women, both nationally and internationally.

Similarly, the International Youth Conference to Achieve Sustainable Development was held under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme. It focused on raising awareness among young people of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhancing their role in achieving them.

In the context of Bahrain's keen interest in pursuing its efforts to achieve the SDGs and to maintain its leading position among countries with very high indicators in the field of human development, according to international sources, Bahrain looks forward to the forthcoming signing of a strategic partnership framework with the United Nations for the period 2017-2020.

My country has also made strides towards the elimination of forced labour and human trafficking by ratifying the relevant international agreements and protocols. It further issued an act prohibiting all forms

of human trafficking, with severe sentences imposed on the perpetrators, while also implementing the national referral system for the victims of trafficking — the first of its kind in the region — which provides a mechanism to monitor and redress that illegal practice.

Recently, the Kingdom of Bahrain issued the Unified Family Law, a key legislative tool for the consolidation of the family's stability and the preservation of all its rights without exploitation or mistreatment. That is based on the noble teachings of Islam and the principles enshrined in the Bahraini Constitution that the family is the foundation of society. That law equally exemplifies Bahrain's commitment to international instruments related to the family and women, including, most importantly, those of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In support of the United Nations endeavours to address global warming and its implications in the area of climate change, the Kingdom of Bahrain deposited its instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2016, thereby renewing its commitment to that historic agreement, which we hope will consolidate international efforts to address that perilous phenomenon.

The Kingdom of Bahrain firmly believes that the maintenance of stability and security in the Middle East and the entire world requires a strong and common political will, as well as serious collective efforts to guarantee respect for the basic principles underlying relations among States, such as good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and compliance with international conventions and instruments, so that we can address the greatest challenge facing us, namely, terrorism, and deter individuals and entities from supporting and financing it. That is especially important now that terrorism is no longer limited to terrorist organizations that we are able to confront and eliminate. Rather, it has become a tool in the hands of States determined to generate crises in other countries in the pursuit of their own agenda. They have consequently become fully complicit partners in the commission of terrorist acts and a factor in the destabilization of international peace and security.

Given the strategic importance of peace and security for our vital region, my country is seeking to establish strategic partnerships within its own region and with its allies. As partners, we can work together to preserve the security of the Gulf region, combat

terrorism and provide protection for international navigation and commerce routes, in particular through close cooperation between the Bahrain Defense Force and the American Fifth Fleet, based in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The summit of the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the United States of America was held in May this year in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and produced a memorandum of understanding to establish a centre responsible for combating the financing of terrorism. That and the Arab-Islamic-American summit are both important landmarks in combating terrorism in that they establish a strategic and effective partnership among the United States of America, the States of the GCC and the other Arab Islamic countries.

We reaffirm that the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology, which was inaugurated in Riyadh on the sidelines of the GCC-United States summit, will make a significant contribution to combating extremist ideologies and will promote the values of tolerance and coexistence throughout the world. In that context, I commend the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 71/291, which established the Office of Counter-Terrorism, an important step towards the consolidation of international efforts to address that scourge.

It is no longer acceptable that among us there are rogue countries that continue to occupy others' territories, thereby violating the sovereignty of States, threatening international peace and security, supporting extremism and terrorism, and spreading hate and anarchy. It is no longer tenable that we allow those countries to join our efforts to end struggles, resolve conflicts and halt complex humanitarian tragedies — situations that those countries were responsible for aggravating. We should refuse them the opportunity to be included among us and to misuse their voice to satisfy their ambitions and hostile goals. Confronting those countries is a duty and a responsibility that the entire international community must shoulder. They should either respect their commitments and keep pace with the collective international will to achieve peace, development and welfare, or be held clearly accountable and suffer isolation and the severe consequences of international resolutions and laws.

Against that backdrop, and to consolidate anti-terrorist and anti-extremist efforts, the Kingdom

of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Arab Republic of Egypt, with the support of many other countries, availed themselves of their sovereign right under international law to sever relations with Qatar. That followed a long period of patience during which we exhausted all available means to halt Qatar's policies that violated all fraternal relations of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Qatar provided financial support and safe haven to terrorists and fugitives and disseminated a narrative replete with hate and extremism through its media and the individuals and institutions supporting it — all of whom we have placed on a unified terrorist list and most of whom are also included on international terrorist lists. That was done to make the situation clear to the entire world following the fallout of that terrorism, which spread to many countries, including my own. Qatar has supported systematic terrorist acts whose consequences we have suffered in the Kingdom of Bahrain and which have cost us the lives of many innocent civilians and security personnel. It has done so with a view to undermining national security and societal peace and overthrowing the Government system with the support of their affiliates.

It is therefore our collective responsibility to protect our States and peoples from those who seek to harm them, and to confront them firmly. If Qatar is serious — by its actions and not only its words — about engaging in dialogue and reclaiming its place among us, it must respond positively and commit to our reasonable demands in full transparency, based on the principles enshrined in the joint statement issued following meeting of the four countries in Cairo on 5 July 2017, in full conformity with international covenants and instruments. In that connection, we highly appreciate the tireless efforts and the good offices of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait.

We stress the fact that all actions taken against Qatar are directed neither against our peoples nor the Qatari people, for whom we have nothing but respect and affection and with whom we are linked by religion, family relations and a common history. We will always support their security and stability, and to that end, our countries have taken a number of measures to address the humanitarian issues, including those concerning family relations and health conditions. That was clearly shown by the facilities recently provided to Qataris

by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including for Hajj and Umrah. That confirms the solid ties and refutes assertions of blockades or violations of human rights.

I take this opportunity to express my country's congratulations to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the great success of the Hajj season, which has been widely praised by all those participating in that major Islamic rite. It is a meaningful riposte to all those seeking to politicize the Hajj and turn it into an occasion for fomenting conflict and sedition. In attending to its highest priority, the Saudi Government thereby demonstrated its outstanding ability to protect the Two Holy Mosques and other sacred sites, as well as all the visitors performing the rites of Hajj or Umrah.

Regimes that constantly seek to spread anarchy and evil are instruments of destruction and will be the biggest losers as they drift away from the values of collective cooperation among nations. Such is the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the people suffer from oppression, misery and poverty while gallows are erected in the streets. Living conditions are harsh and have taken that people — who are rich in history and civilization — backward dozens of years. Their resources are wasted to fuel violence and undermine the region's security for the sake of realizing Iran's hegemonic and expansionist ambitions through its Revolutionary Guard and its affiliates, such as the terrorist Hizbullah in Lebanon and Syria, the militias in Yemen and the terrorist cells and groups in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq, as well as other countries that have suffered because of those hostile actions for such a protracted period.

We believe that the statement by the American President before the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.3) presents an accurate interpretation that clearly denounces the dangerous nature of the Iranian rogue regime, which undermines peace in the region. The world must confront that regime, stop it from pursuing its policies and financing of terrorism and oblige it to respect its neighbours' sovereignty. Since we always aspire to peace, we affirm that establishing normal ties with Iran is subject to the latter relinquishing its hegemonic, sectarian and ideological policies. Iran must respect the national values of peoples and refrain from exporting its revolution, which is based on a theocratic system of government. It must abide by the principles of good neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries.

We also call on Iran to end its occupation of the three Emirati islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — and to respond favourably to the peaceful initiative of the United Arab Emirates to recoup sovereignty over its territories, either through direct and serious negotiations, or by referral to the International Court of Justice.

On the other hand, the Republic of Iraq, which has suffered for so long and is still suffering from foreign interference, has recently achieved, with the means available to it, the liberation of the cities of Mosul and Tal Afar from the grip of Da'esh. That would not have been possible without the immense sacrifices by the Iraqi armed forces, the determination by the Government under Haider Al Abadi and the support provided by the Global Coalition against Da'esh, of which Bahrain is an active member. We reaffirm our constant support for all efforts aimed at restoring peace and security throughout Iraq and preserving its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

With regard to the situation in the Republic of Yemen, we reiterate our firm position of support for the legitimate Government under the leadership of President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour. We support that Government through our participation in the Arab coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen and through our support for the measures taken by the legitimate Government to extend its authority over all of Yemeni territory and to put an end to militias that attempt coups d'état with the support of foreign powers. We support the Government's steps to reach a comprehensive political solution on the basis of international mandates, notably the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the national dialogue and Security Council resolution 2216 (2015). That will terminate all forms of foreign intervention and put an end to the critical humanitarian situation of the Yemeni people.

We reaffirm that we do not side with any one Yemeni party against the other, but rather we oppose foreign intervention that seeks to harm this beloved country. We appreciate the efforts of Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen.

We in the Syrian Arab Republic urge the international community to exert greater efforts to protect civilians and save their lives, to compel all parties to abide by the ceasefire decision and the

establishment of the de-escalation zones, to guarantee access to besieged areas for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to intensify support to countries hosting large numbers of our Syrian brethren, most notably the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. That is in addition to pushing forward all efforts aimed at achieving a political solution that would preserve Syria's unity and territorial integrity while ending foreign intervention in its internal affairs. The solution should also see the abolition of all terrorist organizations and provide peace and security to all Syrians so they can actively participate in the determination of their own future, on the basis of the first Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) and Security Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016).

We reaffirm our support for the Astana talks and the action of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, in the hope that they will contribute to the resolution of this protracted crisis.

In Libya, we applaud the liberation of a number of major cities from the hands of terrorist groups. We reaffirm our full support for the efforts of all actors to achieve consensus among all Libyan parties and for the implementation of the political agreement signed in Skhirat. Those efforts include those by Libya's neighbouring countries and the meetings held in the United Arab Emirates and the French Republic between Mr. Faiez Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, and Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, Commander-in-Chief of the Libyan army. We hope that such efforts will continue with a view to preserving Libya's unity and territorial integrity, consistent with the aspirations of the people for development and progress. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Ghassan Salamé as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Libya and wish him every success.

With regard to the question of the Moroccan Sahara, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need to support the negotiations aimed at achieving a consensual and final political solution to that problem, in the context of national sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco and on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions that confirm the seriousness of Morocco's self-government initiative. We urge all parties to fully cooperate with the United Nations in that regard.

We reiterate our total objection to the plight of Muslims in Myanmar as a result of excessive use of force. We call on the Myanmar Government to assume its responsibilities in protecting the Rohingya Muslims and to facilitate their access to all forms of relief and assistance so as to put an end to this human tragedy.

The Palestinian question is at the top of the foreign-policy priorities of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which has always stood with the Palestinian people in their legitimate aspirations to enjoy all their legitimate rights, including an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital and within the borders of 4 June 1967, in conformity with the relevant international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution.

We welcome the positive steps taken lately by Palestinian factions to end their divisions in favour of the vital Palestinian interests through political work and non-violence. We commend the pivotal role played by His Excellency President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt in that respect. It confirms the central role of Egypt in the support of causes related to the Arab nation, of which it constitutes the strategic centre. It is the main pillar of peace and security in the region.

The Palestinian question is not a religious issue. Palestine is the cradle of religions where everyone lived in perfect harmony. Rather, it is a political issue par excellence, an issue of territorial occupation that must end. Its people must return to their homeland. Rights denied must be restored to their owners. That precisely is what Israel, notwithstanding all its security concerns, should understand, for it will achieve peace for its people and for itself only when it abandons all forms of violence against Palestinians. It should halt its settlement activities and stop violating the sanctity of religious sites, especially the repeated aggressions and provocative acts in the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, which enrage Muslims all over the world and impede the resumption of the peace process and all regional and international initiatives in its support.

At this juncture, we wish to express our sincere appreciation for the commendable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the substantial assistance it provides the Palestinians inside the territory and in the neighbouring countries.

The Kingdom of Bahrain stresses the need to achieve universal adherence to the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, taking into account the right of all peoples to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. Also, Israel should implement the resolution issued by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons pertaining to a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East. Equally, we stress the need for Iran to implement Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), on the Iranian nuclear agreement, including those parts concerning ballistic and other weapons. Iran will face severe sanctions if it violates the commitments outlined in that resolution or in the international safeguard system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Further, we welcome Security Council resolution 2375 (2017), which pertains to new sanctions on North Korea, in view of its continued nuclear and ballistic missiles tests, which threaten its neighbours and international peace and security.

Since its inception as an Arab and Islamic entity in 1783, the Kingdom of Bahrain has firmly believed in the importance of collective action in the pursuit of security, development and prosperity. It orients all of its means toward the service of its people, its region and the world as a whole. Since time immemorial, Allah has blessed it with wise leadership that has inherited an acute sense of responsibility for the achievement of the ultimate objectives of ideal relations with its neighbours. It will steadfastly follow that path and will never go astray. It will remain an effective member of the international community and a trusted partner in its Arab and Islamic setting and will hold onto that approach as the solid foundation of its foreign relations. We will remain open to all cultures and peoples, in the spirit of tolerance and moderation, and will pursue the path to progress and development with determination and perseverance in order to safeguard our achievements, development and prosperity.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to extend my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am confident that with his extensive diplomatic experience, he will guide the session with great success. We stand ready to extend our full support and

cooperation to him in the discharge of his noble duty. Likewise, let me extend my profound congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for the successful completion of his tenure as the President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Once again, let me take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as the Secretary-General and for his initiative on the management reform of the United Nations, so that the Organization can respond effectively to the current global challenges. I hope that such efforts will contribute to the attainment of the aims and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I join other representatives in extending our deep sympathy to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that have been severely affected by recent natural disasters.

Mr. Brown (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today, the current global geopolitical landscape is fraught with myriad challenges that pose major threats to peace and security and hamper the development of countries and regions of the world. Therefore our concerted efforts are required to overcome those obstacles and challenges so that people in different countries and regions of the world can live their lives in durable peace and prosperity. That is why the theme chosen for the seventy-second session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is apt, as the international community is focusing on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has promised to leave no one behind.

It is my firm belief that peace and security remain the common aspiration of the international community. Therefore, in order to maintain and promote peace and development, it is incumbent upon us to enhance collaboration so that peace and sustainable development can prevail in our world. The United Nations, which is the only universal Organization with mandates to maintain and promote peace and cooperation for development, has to be at the forefront. To realize those objectives, the United Nations needs to be reformed in such a way that it can respond to the current needs and pressing challenges of today.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic earnestly hopes to see a world without nuclear and other weapons

of mass destruction. In that context, we welcome the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which we also signed two days ago. However, we are well aware that we still have an uphill task ahead of us for the Treaty to enter into force and be effectively implemented. Therefore, the international community has to redouble its efforts in that respect.

Throughout the past decades, we have seen that many countries in the world have experienced sustained economic growth and rapid development, which have lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. That is thanks to peace and security, which have been essential prerequisites for the social and economic advancement of nations. At the same time, the improvement of people's well-being will have a positive impact on political stability and social order and will help to reduce conflicts. Past experience shows that settling disputes by peaceful means and through diplomatic solutions is the best way to do so, as it is more durable and causes no loss of lives or property. Thus, it is important for the international community to further build mutual trust and flexibility and to jointly address the root causes of problems.

In that spirit, the Lao People's Democratic Republic calls on all parties involved in disputes or conflicts in various regions of the world to exercise the utmost restraint and resolve such conflicts through diplomatic and peaceful means so as to de-escalate tensions, as we firmly believe that only a peaceful environment can form a foundation for advancing national social and economic development.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba and earnestly hopes that such relations will be enhanced, leading to the lifting of the embargo in the near future. That would bring about real benefits to the peoples of the two countries, as well as to the region and the world at large. Likewise, the Lao People's Democratic Republic also hopes that the Palestinian issue, which has lasted for many decades, will be resolved through peaceful means, with a view to creating two independent States of Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace, security and within internationally recognized borders, as stipulated in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

This year, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) turns 50. Over the past five decades,

ASEAN has gone through a number of challenges and has adjusted itself to the changing regional and international environment, while taking into account its diversity and the particularities in the region. It has achieved progress gradually, which led to the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of 2015.

The most remarkable achievement of ASEAN is its maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region, thus creating favourable conditions for ASEAN member States for the pursuit of their socioeconomic development and regional economic integration. At the same time, ASEAN has strengthened its relations with external parties, especially its dialogue partners in a substantive and comprehensive manner, based on mutual benefit. Importantly, ASEAN centrality has been recognized by all external partners under ASEAN-initiated mechanisms. Countries in the region and beyond are keen to forge cooperation with ASEAN, as it provides a venue for them to participate in discussions on many important regional and international issues of common interest and concern, thereby promoting mutual understanding and trust among participants, as well as peace, stability and development in the region and the world.

ASEAN's achievements have been possible thanks to the ASEAN Way, which is an important factor, especially the principles of consultation and consensus and moving at a pace comfortable to all. The ASEAN Way signifies ASEAN centrality and unity. The ASEAN Way remains relevant, and ASEAN will continue to uphold its principles in the years to come.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic attaches great importance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since its adoption, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been streamlined into our national socioeconomic development plan for 2016-2020, and a national steering committee for the implementation of the SDGs, which is chaired by our Prime Minister, has been formally established. At the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in July, the Lao People's Democratic Republic registered to submit and present our Voluntary National Review in 2018. All this has demonstrated our Government's firm political will and unwavering commitment to implementing and achieving the SDGs, as well as to building a strong foundation to support our country's aspirations to

graduate from the status of least developing country by 2020.

In pursuit of fostering an enabling environment conducive to achieving sustainable development, the Lao Government has undertaken an important initiative in adopting our national SDG 18, entitled "Lives Safe from UXO", which was officially launched by our Prime Minister and former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in September 2016 on the sidelines of the eighth ASEAN-United Nations summit in Vientiane. SDG 18 aims to address specific development challenges caused by unexploded ordnance and mitigate its impacts on the lives of our people, which will pave the way for improving the livelihood and well-being of the rural population and enabling them to contribute to the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As both a least developed country (LDC) and a landlocked country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic encounters various challenges that hinder our socioeconomic development and the achievement of our agreed global development goals. Against that backdrop, the country has pursued its development through the implementation of our eighth five-year national socioeconomic development plan. The Strategy 2025 and the Vision 2030 are aimed at graduating from LDC status and becoming a high-middle-income country by 2030.

Towards that end, the Lao People's Democratic Republic pursues a policy of transforming itself from a landlocked country into a land-linked hub, facilitating direct connectivity between immediate neighbouring countries such as Viet Nam, Thailand and China, and the wider region. We hope to constitute a part of the production and supply chains through the implementation of infrastructure projects; the improvement of logistics and transport networks, such as the construction of a high-speed railway from Vientiane to Kunming, in southern China; and the improvement of the north-south economic corridor and the east-west economic corridor, among others. Those national strategies are being implemented as part of international and regional initiatives under way, including the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the ASEAN Master Plan 2025 and China's One Belt and Road Initiative, of which the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a partner.

I am of the view that political will is a fundamental principle for attaining all agreed development goals.

Without firm political commitment, we will not be able to turn the Agenda for Sustainable Development into concrete actions and outcomes. Therefore, my delegation firmly believes that development remains an integral part of and a top priority for ensuring international peace, security and human rights, all of which are closely linked.

Against that backdrop, we call on the international community to increase concerted efforts to ensure that development brings equal benefits for all countries. The Lao Government once again reaffirms its strong commitment and determination to work more closely with the international community in order to realize the 2030 Agenda and achieve our national development objectives of eradicating poverty, laying a solid foundation for graduation from LDC status, turning the country into an industrialized and modern nation and moving towards the direction of green and sustainable development that benefits all the people, thereby ensuring that no one in the country is left behind.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with responsibility for Brexit of Ireland.

Mr. Coveney (Ireland): Allow me to begin by offering Ireland's sympathy to all those in Mexico affected by the devastating earthquake earlier this week and to commend those who have been engaged in the heroic rescue operations of the last few days. I also want to extend condolences to the representatives of people in the Caribbean islands, who are facing extraordinary difficulties following the recent, relentless hurricanes.

Now is no time for business as usual at the United Nations. The international community is facing unprecedented challenges and must respond. I am here because I think that this Organization matters. It is an Organization that now faces daily challenges to its political authority and management missions.

My country, Ireland, has kept faith with the United Nations since we joined as a young republic that had fought hard for its own independence and saw being a Member of the United Nation as fundamental to its future and the future security of its people. Over 60 years later, we still do. Our faith has not been misplaced, and it is as strong today as ever. However, we certainly have something to say about the future of the Organization and the role we believe it must play in reducing suffering across the globe and securing a shared peace and security and prosperity for everybody.

Given our history as a small country, with its own troubled past, we see very clearly the advantages of a rules-based order in international affairs. It is because Ireland is small, outward-looking and heavily dependent on external trade for our own well-being that we pursue an active foreign policy.

As Ireland's experience in the European Union has shown us, we are far stronger acting collectively than we are acting alone. Partnership and cooperation has brought peace and prosperity to the European continent. In fact, for Ireland, our membership of the European Union, working closely with other member States, has strengthened our independence and self-confidence and security rather than diminished it. It is therefore through collective actions that we reinforce our own security and well-being, which is what the United Nations needs to be all about.

The case for international cooperation and multilateralism is compelling. By working together, we lay foundations of trust, align our perspectives more closely and accept our differences more willingly. Perhaps most importantly, we build habits of cooperation that better allow us to address the common threats and opportunities that we should be facing together. The alternatives — unilateralism, transactional diplomacy, protectionism and confrontation — are not, in fact, viable at all. Their short-term populist appeal obscures their long-term cost. Surely we have learned that from history.

We are living in an era when local and global challenges are intersecting with increasing force. Today's problems do not carry passports or recognize international borders. There are no unilateral solutions to the vast majority of the global challenges that we face together. Local and regional issues, from climate change, migration, armed conflict and hunger to the destruction of the marine environment in certain parts of the world, often become global issues, including in corners of the world that are far from the origins of the problems.

The enormous scale of the challenges that face the world might lead some to question whether multilateralism and the United Nations are up to the task. My response is that we can be, and we must be. When properly mobilized, when we pull together and move from debating halls like this Hall to actually getting things done on the ground, we can move mountains together. The United Nations delivers

extraordinary results, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The United Nations has led the global effort to eradicate smallpox, end apartheid, promote arms control, save the lives of millions of children through UNICEF and protect our cultural heritage through UNESCO.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a stand-out recent achievement. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have the power and potential to transform our world, addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality and instability. However, their potential can be realized only through a strong and confident multilateral system that empowers Member States to reach the ambitious but necessary targets we have set ourselves. Having played an important role in facilitating agreement on the SDGs in 2015, Ireland is committed to their implementation, domestically and through our foreign policy.

Failure should not be an option here. The United Nations is the fulcrum upon which we can leverage the change required. However, the walls dividing the three pillars of the United Nations — development, human rights, and peace and security — have in the past impeded our efforts to accelerate sustainable development. In my view, the SDGs represent a fundamental breakthrough, recognizing the many aspects of sustainable development that straddle those pillars. As we move forward on implementation, we must break down the Organization's institutional silos, which sometimes hinder progress.

Since we gathered here a year ago, we appointed António Guterres as Secretary-General. Ireland believes that he has the skills, experience and, perhaps most importantly, the compassion to do a very tough but hugely important job. The difficult international environment demands, more than ever, brave and principled leadership. We welcome the clear direction the Secretary-General is providing and the steps he is taking to reform the Organization.

While we, the Member States, have expressed confidence that the Secretary-General has the abilities to lead the United Nations forward at a time when the world is crying out for better multilateral engagement, we must allow him to lead. It is very tempting for Member States, particularly large ones, to micromanage the work of the Secretariat, but such an approach is likely to impede and not enhance reform.

However, it is not enough that only the internal mechanisms of the United Nations meet twenty-first century standards. United Nations political bodies must also reflect today's world and realities. Nowhere is that more evident than with regard to the composition of the Security Council. The Security Council does not reflect the world that has evolved since the United Nations was established in 1945. Quite plainly, we would be hard pressed to find any entity, public or private, anywhere in the world that remains so untouched by the changes and realities of the world around it.

Vast areas of our world are either insufficiently represented or not represented at all on the Security Council. In our view, the need to increase the size of the Council is clear. Ireland sees the obvious need for a much stronger African representation on the Council, so that there can be a greater African say in the Council decisions that affect their continent. We would also favour consideration of a designated seat for small island developing States. Those changes are politically controversial, but we cannot ignore them forever.

The makeup of the Security Council is not the only problem. Let us be clear and honest. While the use or threat of the veto remains in place, as it does today, the work of the Council is often impeded and the United Nations can be paralysed in its capacity to respond to the gravest crises facing the international community. The failure of the Security Council to take action in preventing mass atrocity crimes — most recently with regard to Syria, but also on other occasions — betrays victims and weakens the credibility of the Organization. The case for reform is therefore not an academic or institutional question; it is a deeper question of fundamental legitimacy and effectiveness and credibility for the United Nations in the future.

Although geographically a small island on the periphery of Europe, Ireland's people and its outlook are global, influenced by connecting with people and events around the world, as we do. In many ways Ireland, like some of the other nations represented here, is like a global tribe that extends far beyond our own island.

No part of our contribution to the United Nations resonates more with Irish people than our United Nations peacekeepers — the thousands of men and women who have served under Blue Helmets, representing Ireland, our people and values. They are true ambassadors. Since 1958, when Irish troops first

began serving the United Nations, not a single day has passed without Irish participation in United Nations peace-support operations. We believe that we are making a difference. Ireland's peacekeepers have been natural soldier-diplomats in trouble spots across the globe, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, doing United Nations work day by day and deed by deed.

Today, we have almost 550 troops in the field. Ireland is the highest per capita European Union contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping, with deployments to six United Nations missions across the Middle East and Africa. We are making a substantial contribution to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in particular, where, as always, our peacekeepers act with impartiality and integrity and provide the necessary leadership required in a very difficult and challenging environment.

I am pleased to note that Ireland is committed to doubling the number of women in our defence forces—I was the Minister for Defence when that decision was made—with the aim also of significantly increasing female participation in peacekeeping, a demand of the Secretary-General. As the Secretary-General said at the Security Council this week (see S/PV.8051), and as we know from the women and peace and security agenda, increased female participation leads to better decision-making, improved situational awareness, a better focus on protection of civilians and enhanced reporting of and accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse.

We all know that conflict prevention has the potential to save lives and to protect hard-won development gains, and that it comes at a far lower financial cost than peacekeeping operations, post-conflict peacebuilding or, in some cases, State-building. We strongly support the Secretary-General's efforts to reorient the international community's thinking toward crisis and conflict prevention. Ireland seeks to share our own national experience and past in our work on conflict prevention, mediation and State-building. We have made some mistakes, but we have also had successes, and we would like others to share the lessons from that experience.

As the first State to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in 1968, we have a deep commitment to its full implementation. Earlier this week I was very pleased to sign the recently approved Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons, which was supported by 122 members of this Assembly, and growing. Ireland is proud to have played a leadership role, together with Austria, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa, in bringing forward the Assembly resolution convening the diplomatic conference that negotiated this ground-breaking treaty.

The case for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons has never been stronger, as the volatile situation on the Korean peninsula makes very clear this week. I unreservedly condemn the recent series of missile and nuclear weapons testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These developments highlight the urgent need for the swift and immediate entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. I understand that I will be followed today on this rostrum by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic, and I would urge him to de-escalate the provocative language and tensions of this week. This is a conflict that the world does not need and must move away from.

The scale and severity of humanitarian crises is one of the greatest challenges facing the international community. Ireland is committed to providing humanitarian assistance and contributing to international efforts to ease the plight of civilians caught in conflicts in South Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Iraq, to name but a few. As those large-scale crises dominate the headlines, Ireland is conscious of the many forgotten or underfunded crises and the need to maintain a focus on ensuring that human suffering, wherever it occurs in the world, is not ignored.

The vast majority of displaced people are being sheltered in communities that are already experiencing high levels of vulnerability and poverty, placing a huge strain on already limited resources. Therefore Ireland is supporting both refugees and vulnerable host communities on the basis of need. I particularly want to acknowledge the generosity of so many States—such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and many more—that are hosting very large numbers of people displaced by conflicts in neighbouring countries.

Ireland is proud of its strong and targeted contribution to eradicating global hunger, reducing extreme poverty, addressing conflict and instability and responding to humanitarian crises wherever they occur. It is horrifying to think that in 2017 we have four famines affecting more than 20 million people,

70 per cent of whom are children, and that we as an international community have allowed that to happen, knowing that it was on the way. For Ireland, strong partnerships, especially with least developed countries, will remain at the core of our approach as we work together for a peaceful and prosperous future. We applaud the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance coherence, effectiveness and accountability, as well as the delivery of results where it matters most — which is on the ground.

The Charter of the United Nations does not begin "We the Member States" but rather "We the peoples". Our policies and actions must reflect the inherent equality of humankind at the core of our multilateral system. In practice, that means listening to and heeding the voices of women, the voices of young people and the voices of the marginalized. The women and peace and security agenda has had a hugely positive global impact with the realization that we can create more durable and sustainable peace by working to ensure that women play their rightful role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Ireland will play our part, including as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women for the next two years.

A similar strategic approach must also be taken in engaging young people in all our countries. Young people must have a role in shaping a future that they will ultimately inherit; otherwise, we are, on a generational basis, robbing a future from them. We have a phrase in Irish that the interpreters will not be able to translate: "*Aid an óige agus tuiscaidh sí*". Broadly translated, this means "Praise the youth and they will come". I cannot think of any continent where that is more relevant today than Africa. Young people are key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and we must find ways to encourage their active participation, again and again and again, ensuring that they are part of shaping the solutions for their future.

There are positive signs: the vitality of entrepreneurship, the creative use of technology, infrastructure development, the potential of renewable energy, increasing access to good education, improvements in agricultural yields, adding value to commodities, and better prospects for women and girls in politics and economic life. African countries are particularly affected by global challenges that lie outside their control in many ways, such as climate change, conflict and food insecurity. Those issues can be addressed only in their African contexts, in a

spirit of effective global partnership. Such partnership requires understanding local perspectives anchored in local experience, particularly regarding how to tackle root causes.

I want Ireland to play a leading role in Europe in helping to build better and more effective partnerships with the continent of Africa as a whole, rooted in shared interests and values and sustained over the medium to long term on the basis of parity of esteem and equality. We need a new political architecture, in my view, for the relationship between the European Union and Africa, one that matches the urgency and scale of the shared challenges we know we are going to face over the next twenty years. We are in the same global neighbourhood, and we need to put structures in place to treat each other as true neighbours.

The Middle East is also part of Europe's close neighbourhood, and its challenges resonate deeply with the people of Ireland. The conflicts in Syria and Yemen have caused untold suffering. Ireland has responded as generously as we can with almost €100 million in humanitarian aid, but what the people of Syria and Yemen need most right now is peace to enable them to rebuild their lives and start the process of rebuilding their countries. I urge all sides in the two conflicts to work for an end to violence and to engage in the search for peaceful political solutions under United Nations auspices and for accountability for crimes committed.

Ireland is committed to constructive and principled diplomatic action on the Middle East peace process. Next year will be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords. We cannot let ourselves become complacent about the status quo because the status quo is not acceptable, and we know where it is going. We cannot let our efforts to achieve peace stagnate either. Palestinians need an end to occupation, and Israelis need security. Continued construction of settlements undermines both objectives, and we need to act on that. I wish the United States success in its efforts to build some momentum for peace and a new peace initiative for the first time in quite some time.

Ireland will give all the support it can to achieving a two-State solution, which we remain convinced is the only way to secure prosperity and security for both peoples. The time to act on this is now. We cannot become cynical or jaded. We owe it to all Palestinians and Israelis to continue to bring energy, resolve and ideas to the table and help them finally deliver a lasting

peace, which would not only be good for both of those peoples, but also a welcome, if not a desperately needed, positive news story for the broader Middle East as well.

In relation to Myanmar, Ireland strongly condemns the violence in Rakhine state that has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes into neighbouring Bangladesh. Here at the General Assembly we have to insist on an end to violence, to the upholding of the rule of law and the recognition of the right of return of all those who have been forced to leave their country. I know the situation is difficult — my friend from Singapore has highlighted its complexities — but we have to ensure that standards are met.

Ireland sees itself as a natural child of the United Nations. We are small. We are an island that has experienced colonization and conflict, as many of us here have also done. But here at the United Nations, we listen to others, especially if we hold a different view on an issue or a policy. We are convinced that in today's globalized world we must live in each other's shelter and not in each other's shadow.

Ireland's contribution to the United Nations in the fields of sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disarmament, human rights and the rule of law has been steadfast. United Nations membership has been and will continue to be at the very heart of Irish foreign policy. Ireland is proud to be a candidate for a seat on the Security Council in the elections to be held in 2020. We have presented our candidature because we believe deeply that we should step forward and play our part in support of multilateralism at a time of significant global instability and realignment of geopolitical influences.

We have something to say, and we will listen to others when they speak. We will be courageous on behalf of the United Nations when needed. With Ireland, the world knows what it gets — a small country with big thinking, a country that listens and a strong independent voice that promotes the values that should inspire the Organization in future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ri Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Yong Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as the

President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I look forward to the successful outcome of this session, which will unfold under his able guidance.

Before going into the main points in my remarks, I feel obligated to make comments on the speech made some four days ago by someone called the United States President, which tainted this sacred United Nations forum (see A/72/PV.3). Since Trump uttered such reckless and violent words from this very rostrum, attacking the supreme dignity of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I think it is fair for me to respond in a corresponding tone.

During his eight months in power, he has turned the White House into a noisy marketplace filled with the crackling sounds of abacus beads. Now he has tried to turn the United Nations forum into a gangster's nest where only money is respected and bloodshed is the order of the day. The absurd reality of a person like Trump — a mentally deranged and complacent megalomaniac, a person who is even chastised by some Americans as "Commander-in-Grief", "Lyin' King" and "President Evil" — holding the office of President of the United States, and, indeed, the dangerous reality of an aging gambler using threats, fraud and every other type of schemes to acquire a patch of land having his finger on the nuclear button, are what constitute the gravest threat to international peace and security today.

Due to his lack of basic common knowledge and appropriate feelings, he has tried to insult the supreme dignity of my country by referring to its leader as "rocket man". By doing so, however, he has committed the irreversible error of making our rockets rain down on the entire United States mainland all the more inevitable. No one other than Trump himself is on a suicide mission. Should innocent lives in the United States be harmed by his suicidal inclinations, Trump will be held totally responsible.

Our respected Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un responded to Trump's statement:

"As a man who represents the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and on behalf of the dignity and honour of my State and my people, and on my own behalf, I will make the man holding the prerogative of the supreme command in the United States pay dearly for his speech calling for the total destruction of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

Trump may not have been aware of what he uttered, but we will make sure that he bears consequences far beyond his words and far beyond the scope of what he can handle — even if he claims to be able to handle anything.

The theme of the seventy-second session is “Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”. For all countries and peoples to enjoy peace and a decent life, it is imperative that genuine international justice be realized before anything else. Realizing international justice is one of the principal missions of the United Nations.

As Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations stipulates, one of the purposes of the United Nations is

“to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace”.

However, due to the high-handedness and arbitrariness of one particular large Power, the purposes and principles of the Charter and other established basic principles of international relations are at present being wantonly ignored in the United Nations arena. Conspiracies to commit abnormal acts that justify or legitimize high-handedness and arbitrariness or acts that violate truth and justice are tolerated or supported.

The most flagrant violation of international justice can be seen in the handling of the situation on the Korean peninsula. Unprecedented acts of injustice, including harsh sanctions imposed on a victim that has chosen to stand up to an offender, are openly committed in the name of the United Nations. The essence of the situation on the Korean peninsula is a confrontation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, where the former is trying to defend its national dignity and sovereignty against the latter's hostile policies and nuclear threats.

The United States is the country that first produced nuclear weapons and the only country to have actually used them, massacring hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. The United States threatened to use nuclear weapons against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the Korean War in the 1950s and first introduced nuclear weapons to the Korean peninsula after that war. The United States started large-scale joint military exercises against the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the Cold War period and further intensified their scope and aggressive nature after the Cold War by staging them more frequently — several times a year — and by mobilizing more strategic nuclear assets.

What could be a bigger threat than the use of the words “fire and fury” and “total destruction”, in the statement made by the President of the world's biggest nuclear Power? The United States is the very reason that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has to possess nuclear weapons. We have had to develop and strengthen our nuclear arsenal to current levels so that we could cope with the threats of that country. The hostile policies and nuclear threats of the United States have continued for over 70 years, which has led to a touch-and-go situation on the Korean peninsula. Further, due to the high-handedness of the United States, the United Nations has adopted unjustifiable resolutions that are the embodiment of injustice.

Our respected Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, has said that international justice is never achieved in a vacuum. Rather, it can be achieved only when independent, anti-imperialist countries are strong enough to demand it.

Absent true international justice, the only philosophical principle that remains valid is that force must be addressed with force. Nuclear weapons of tyranny must therefore be met with the nuclear hammer of justice. Pursuant to this principle, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's use of nuclear deterrence is a righteous act of self-defence, and a last resort.

As part of its efforts to achieve the goal of becoming a nuclear-weapon State, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea recently conducted the successful test of a hydrogen bomb that can be mounted on an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). With this step, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is in the process of consolidating its status as a nuclear Power, consistent with its double aim of developing its economy and its nuclear arsenal. For all intents and purposes, our nuclear weapons are a deterrent designed to put an end to the nuclear threat of the United States and to prevent a military invasion by that country. Our ultimate goal is to establish a balance of power with the United States.

Everyone present in this Hall today is aware that, at every stage in the development and growth of its nuclear arsenal, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, unlike other nuclear-weapon States, has never failed to disclose its testing or the results of its testing. Since we have sufficiently strengthened our deterrent with a view to safeguarding the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and the region, the United States and its followers must now think twice before launching a military provocation against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Although the United States speaks of fire and fury and total destruction, *inter alia*, every time it makes such provocations it is compelled to use qualifiers such as "hopefully that will not be necessary" or "that is not our first option" and so on. Accordingly, we are convinced that our actions have helped to consolidate the peace and security of North-East Asia and the region as a whole as much as possible.

We do not need anyone else to recognize our status as a nuclear-weapon State or our nuclear-strike capability. As it flew through the endless blue sky in the recent ballistic test, our ICBM etched the sacred name of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea across the universe. The rocket's warhead left its trace on the blue waves of the Pacific Ocean, and the tremendous explosion and vibrations caused by the hydrogen bomb were recorded all over the planet. Although our decision to opt for possession of nuclear weapons was forced upon us by the United States, it has resulted in our country achieving the status of a nuclear-weapon State and a rocket-possessing Power. The attendant prestige has become a part of the immortal destiny of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The failure of the United Nations to fulfil its role of realizing genuine international justice is a primary result of the undemocratic and antiquated practices of the Security Council. For it is none other than the Security Council that disregards the Charter of the United Nations and acts only to satisfy the will and interests of its permanent members. It is not a trivial detail that the issue of Security Council reform was raised as early as 1992, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, in resolution 47/62. Since then, the issue of Security Council reform has been discussed at the General Assembly every year for the past 25 years, without any progress whatsoever. It is therefore clear how deeply the current permanent members are fixated on their anachronistic vested

interests. One permanent member alone can veto the general will of over 190 States Members of the United Nations, which is a testament to how undemocratic the Security Council is.

In this Hall today, I would like once again to reiterate the unjust and unfair nature of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. First of all, relying on a double standard, the Security Council has adopted illegal resolutions that prohibit the launch of satellites by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such prohibition violates international law, which provides for the peaceful use of outer space as a sovereign right of every State. The Security Council takes no issue with any other satellite-launching countries.

Secondly, also in reliance on a double standard, the Security Council has adopted illegal resolutions that arbitrarily prohibit nuclear tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite the fact that nuclear testing is the strict sovereign right of every State, since the international law on the prohibition of nuclear testing has not yet entered into force. In addition, other countries have conducted far more nuclear tests than we have.

Thirdly, the Security Council has condemned the development of nuclear weapons by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a threat to international peace and security and, on that basis, once again relying on a double standard, has fabricated illegal resolutions that contravene Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which recognizes every State's right to self-defence. The Security Council has taken such action without calling into question other countries that continue to develop nuclear weapons of various kinds.

The reason that those unjust and unfair resolutions continue to be adopted is that the permanent members of the Security Council — all nuclear Powers — have a shared interest in maintaining their monopoly on nuclear status. The permanent members of the Security Council often talk of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, in the context of nuclear non-proliferation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's possession of nuclear weapons is a justified measure of self-defence. Indeed, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was made possible because nuclear-weapon States had promised not to threaten non-nuclear-weapon States with their nuclear arsenals. Article X of the NPT stipulates that

each party shall have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that its supreme interests have been jeopardized. This Article recognizes that the supreme interests of States supersede nuclear non-proliferation. In the end, the United States has itself impeded international efforts aimed at nuclear non-proliferation by refusing to give up making nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Rather, its behaviour has compelled the latter to strive to possess nuclear weapons.

The foregoing eloquently demonstrates that the resolutions adopted to constrain the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are not based on any established principle, but are simply the product of the undemocratic and antiquated practices of the Security Council and the conspiracy and collusion of forces that are obsessed with their own interests alone. The United States makes the claim, even here at the United Nations, that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's possession of hydrogen bomb and intercontinental ballistic missiles constitutes a global threat. However, such a claim is a big lie tantamount to the notorious big lie conjured up by the United States in 2003 about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in order to justify invading that country.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a responsible nuclear-weapon State. We will take preventive measures in the form of merciless pre-emptive action in the event that the United States or its vassal forces show any sign of undertaking any sort of decapitating operation on our headquarters or other military attack against our country. However, we have no intention whatsoever to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the countries that do not join in a United States military action against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The United States is resorting to intrigue when it condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's possession of nuclear weapons as a global threat. It is simply using that fact as a pretext for coercing other States Members of the United Nations into implementing the sanctions resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is a sneaky and selfish attempt by the United States to shirk its responsibility on the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and pursue its own interests by using and sacrificing other countries that have nothing to do with the issue.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea requested the United Nations Secretariat to organize a forum of international law experts to assess the legal grounds and lawfulness of the Security Council resolutions, but we have had no response for nine months. Previously, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had made repeated requests to the Security Council to discuss the serious threat to international peace and security posed by the large-scale, aggressive and provocative joint military exercises undertaken by the United States and South Korea, but each of these requests was turned down and the issue has never been put on the Security Council's agenda.

The Charter of the United Nations stipulates that Members of the United Nations accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. If the resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea adopted at the Security Council were truly lawful and fair, there would be no need at all for United States ambassadors abroad, and even the United States President and the Secretary of State, to coerce other countries into implementing the resolutions. Furthermore, the United States would not have to bring its stooges, for example, South Korea and Japan, into the matter.

The States Members of the United Nations should not give in to pressure exerted by an individual major Power on implementing Security Council resolutions. Rather, they should make an independent judgment on the legality, impartiality and morality of such resolutions and contribute to promoting Security Council reform by further raising their voices against high-handedness and arbitrariness.

The United States imposed sanctions on our country from the very first day that it was founded, and the history of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which spans more than 70 years, is in a sense a history of struggle where its people have had to persevere on the road of self-development despite being under the world's harshest sanctions. Through such a prolonged arduous struggle, we are at last only a few steps away from the final stage of completing the State's nuclear force. The possibility that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea might be shaken an inch or change its stance as a result of harsher sanctions imposed by hostile forces is a vain hope.

In the near future, the day will certainly come when we will settle the account for all damages caused

to our peaceful economic development and to the improvement of our people's lives. All of the sufferings of our innocent women, children and elderly caused by the heinous and barbaric sanctions against our Republic will one day be redressed. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has established a Sanctions Damage Investigation Committee to make a comprehensive study of the total damages inflicted on our Republic by all forms of sanctions. The Committee will thoroughly investigate and compile all physical and moral damage imposed on my country by the United States and its followers, including by those that have submitted to United States coercion. When the pressure caused by this sanctions racket reaches a critical point and drives the Korean peninsula into an uncontrollable situation, the investigation results of this Committee will provide an evidentiary basis for holding those responsible accountable.

My delegation takes this opportunity to extend its strong support to and solidarity with the Cuban Government and the people who are fighting to defend their national sovereignty and realize international justice against the high-handedness and arbitrariness in the form of the unilateral embargo by the United States. We also express strong support to and solidarity with the Government and the people of Venezuela, who are fighting to defend their national sovereignty and the cause of socialism.

Such unjust and contemptible acts as the turning of a blind eye to Israel's heinous acts while condemning in every possible way the Syrian Government for fighting to protect its national sovereignty and security should no longer be tolerated.

In conclusion, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will defend its national peace and security using its powerful nuclear deterrent and will contribute to safeguarding world peace and security.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Abulkarim Al-Jafari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Jafari (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic): My delegation first wishes to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We also congratulate the Republic of Slovakia and wish Mr. Lajčák the greatest success in this role. We also thank his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his

efforts and wise leadership in guiding the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

We wish to express our condolences to the victims of the natural disasters that have struck the United States of America, Mexico and other States in the Caribbean region.

The heroic Iraqi forces won a historic victory that put an end to the myth of the extremist-terrorist State in Mosul. Through their great sacrifices and with the assistance of brother countries, the valiant Iraqi forces recaptured the city of Mosul. The Iraqi Armed Forces are fighting several towns, including Tal Afar, which has just been liberated. They have also contributed, through all their branches, to shutting down all terrorist hotbeds in certain other Iraqi cities, such as Hawija.

I therefore wish today to congratulate our Armed Forces and our proud people who made many sacrifices. I hail all honourable members of the civilized world who supported Iraq and its brave forces in the fight against the terrorist bands from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as Da'esh. We scored a major victory without shirking our duty to protect civilians, who were used as human shields by terrorists, or failing to respect the unity, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Iraq. All branches of the Iraqi Armed Forces, the Iraqi police, the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga forces and other anti-terrorist forces contributed to this historic victory.

It is also a victory for the entire world. Even though the war had been raging in Iraq, it affected a vast number peaceful of citizens in some 120 other States. History teaches us that post-conflict periods can be even more challenging than wartime. Indeed, efforts to restore stability, undertake reconstruction and resurrect hope after the liberation of Iraqi cities, through great sacrifices on the humanitarian and development fronts and the environment, which deteriorated badly. Moreover, Da'esh also conducted environmental terrorism by setting fire to oil wells, destroying small dams and flooding agricultural lands. It has also destroyed our cultural heritage sites.

Today, Iraq is entering a new phase in its just fight against Da'esh bands to respond to the challenges of the post-Da'esh period, including the financial challenges of lower oil prices on international markets. We have developed a comprehensive vision for our future that is based on social, economic and security priorities that

serve Iraq and its citizens. This vision comprises the following main axes.

First, we are restoring security, stability and basic services, allowing people to return to their homes and participate in the reconstruction of all that was destroyed by Da'esh, and caring for the families of the martyrs and victims who paid the ultimate price in defending our State. Also, we are caring for the victims of terrorism, rehabilitating societies so that no trace remains of Da'esh or the culture of hatred and violence, mobilizing all national efforts to achieve those national and humanitarian objectives.

Second, we are ensuring respect and peaceful coexistence among all members of society, regardless of religion, ideology or intellectual affiliation. We have fostered a spirit of confidence and mutual trust among our citizens and are protecting minorities and houses of worship of all religions, which is the basis for social reconciliation.

Third, we will prevent the return of the abnormal practices and phenomena that were present in Iraq before Da'esh took control of parts of the country, in particular, the sectarian and nationalist isolationism that were detrimental to the best interests of the State. Such phenomena made it possible for Da'esh to take over cities and control governorates. We will appeal to the population's spirit of citizenship and desire for unity and cooperation, so that neither Da'esh nor any other terrorist organization can return to Iraq by giving coverage or protection in the areas we have retaken.

Fourth, we believe that it is important to foster a spirit of good-neighbourliness based on the shared interests of all States and work according to our national will and independent decision-making. We will not give in to foreign pressure.

Fifth, we will keep arms exclusively in the hands of our national security forces, putting an end to all armed incidents and reviving the rule of law in all sectors of the State.

Sixth, we will continue our formidable fight against corruption in all of its forms and manifestations, because it is fertile ground for terrorism and crime.

Seventh, State institutions must be sheltered from political interference and favouritism in order to foster justice and equal opportunities and to attract highly specialized professionals into the public-sector workforce.

Iraq is a united, independent and sovereign federal State. It is a State based on a federal Constitution adopted in 2005 by Iraqis from all components of society in a transparent and democratic referendum that enjoyed a high degree of participation. The Constitution respects all rights and obligations of all components of Iraqi society and reinforces the value of citizen participation in democratic political processes and effective political representation in all ministries and independent bodies. Attention has been paid to making it possible for all parties concerned to exercise their rights and responsibilities and participate in political, social, cultural and linguistic events — something that is lacking in many ethnically and religiously diversified states. The Government of Iraq continues to encourage cohesiveness among all members of society.

With regard to the relationship between the federal Government and the Regional Government of Kurdistan, the Government is promoting and will continue to promote constructive dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues with the Regional Government of Kurdistan, without preconditions. We have not accepted the unconstitutional decision adopted by the Iraqi Kurdistan region, nor will we abandon Iraq's unity, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. The National Assembly and its representatives, in the interests of Iraq's unity, voted to reject the so-called referendum. It mandated the national Iraqi Government to take measures to preserve the country's unity and address the pending issue, based on Article 1 of the Constitution, which stipulates that the unity of Iraq is one and its sovereignty is indivisible. The Government, in conformity with its responsibilities, has asked the Supreme Court to issue an order rejecting the so-called referendum, which is supposed to be held in Kurdistan on 25 September. It is a violation of the Constitution, particularly with respect to the status of disputed regions characterized by multinationalism and a multi-religious frame of mind.

In the first three months of next year, Iraq will organize legislative and parliamentary elections. All political forces in the country have already begun to prepare for these elections. Through this democratic process, Iraq's pluralist political system will be strengthened, thereby ensuring the political stability that will protect Iraq against future crises. These successes will also make it possible to consolidate economic progress and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country.

With regard to our relations with the United Nations, we are working with all stakeholders to address pending issues in the Security Council, with a view to being released from the burden of commitments made by previous Iraqi Governments. We have done this gradually, duly respecting international obligations, so that Iraq can resume the status it had enjoyed before the adoption of resolution 661 (1990).

Iraq's deeply held sense of responsibility has included respecting Security Council resolutions on it and on relations between Iraq and Kuwait. We have taken all of the necessary measures to implement resolution 1958 (2010) on the Oil-for-Food Programme. We still face the issue of Kuwait's compensation. Negotiations with our Kuwaiti brothers have begun to settle the issue.

On 21 September, the Security Council adopted the historic resolution 2379 (2017) to collect evidence on the criminal activities perpetrated by Da'esh in Iraq and other States. This resolution establishes a joint investigative mechanism that will comprise judges, prosecutors and Iraqi's criminal experts, working with international experts to collect, compile and preserve evidence against Da'esh in Iraq. We are doing our utmost to ensure that Da'esh is brought to justice for the crimes it committed in Iraq, especially genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Resolution 2379 (2017) is based on the essential pillars of respect for Iraqi sovereignty and legal jurisdiction when it comes to the collection of evidence of crimes Da'esh has committed. We appeal to Member States to provide the necessary financial resources and other forms of support to the joint investigative team.

From this rostrum, Iraq calls for assistance from kindred nuclear-power countries to build a nuclear reactor for peaceful purposes in our country. Iraq wishes to acquire nuclear technology and relaunch various technological sectors on the basis of the right of States to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes, in accordance with article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which provides that States, particularly developing countries, have the inalienable right to pursue research and develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without any discrimination whatsoever.

My country's Government takes note of the threats to peace, security, stability and development throughout the world, which calls for a dialogue

between the various cultures and civilizations. Events in a number of geographic regions reaffirm the importance of reinforcing the culture of peace and strengthening its place on the General Assembly's agenda, especially since Member States have adopted Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies.

Peaceful coexistence among peoples and communities cannot take place without tolerance, because tolerance is the surest way of establishing modern communities, strengthening social linkages and enriching exchanges among various societies. We cannot dispute the fact that the best way of re-establishing lasting peace and tolerance and for strengthening sustainable development is by ensuring that there are equal chances for everybody and a fair distribution of national resources, without discriminating on the basis of race or religion.

Nor can we overlook the role of religious and social leaders to spread the culture of peace in our countries, for all religions call for peace and peaceful coexistence. In this regard, I would like to make reference to the role in Najaf of Mr. Al-Sistani, who contributed several times to putting an end to the divisions that had so severely affected Iraq.

The adoption of the Takfiri school programme and the dissemination of erroneous Takfiri fatwas through the social media led to extremist intellectual and ideological aberrations that facilitated terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It imposed a set of mistaken ideas that threaten international peace and security and human civilization, hence the importance of working with UNESCO and other stakeholders to send a message that appropriate education is essential for spreading the values of tolerance and for rejecting extremism and violence.

The Government of Iraq has made security efforts to re-establish peace and security by adopting a project for national reconciliation in order to strengthen cohesion and unity among the Iraqi people, entrench the principles of national unity, and create the appropriate conditions for love and harmony among all components of Iraqi society, while deepening the spirit of citizenship for the sake of the country. Accordingly, all Iraqis have an equal footing in society, free from any discrimination whatsoever, with a view to strengthening the sense of national unity, responding to challenges and providing

the Iraqi people with everything they need to achieve development and prosperity.

Our region has had to face great waves of displacement as a result of worsening crises that have led to the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation of the displaced. Host countries are no longer able to provide sufficient assistance on their own. The crisis has become even more complex in Iraq because of the increased number of displaced Iraqis who fled areas that had been under Da'esh control, which is an additional burden for the people of Iraq, who are already suffering from a financial crisis stemming from the drop in oil prices and the growth of military spending to counter terrorism.

We therefore reaffirm the importance of intensifying international efforts aimed at settling the issue of displaced people and provide the necessary financial resources, in order to alleviate the suffering of Iraqi displaced persons. We are undertaking ongoing efforts to strengthen our relations with Arab States and other States in the region, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Iran. Once again, we reaffirm that an equitable, sustainable peace is the best strategic choice and that the peace process must be comprehensive.

Peace in our region is impossible without the complete withdrawal of Israel from occupied Palestinian Arab lands and the full establishment of a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital and within the pre-June 1967 borders. The Palestinian question is a priority for Iraq. We will therefore spare no effort in supporting the Palestinian people so that they can enjoy their legitimate right to establish a Palestinian State. We reject all international policies that run counter to the two-State solution or undermine initiatives that could resolve the question of Palestine.

With respect to the situation in Syria, our position has been clear since the crisis there began in 2011. Our position is based on a call for a political solution rather than a military one. We have adopted a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. Iraq supports efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria in order to protect our Syrian brothers and sisters and preserve the unity of Syrian territory. We have opted for a political solution that would settle all of the issues in the Middle East, including the issues of Yemen and Libya. The genocide of the suffering Rohingya people in Rakhine state in Myanmar, which

has been perpetrated by the armed forces of that country, calls for a firm international humanitarian effort to meet the challenge of the scope of the human rights violations and other crimes, which have been described in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We would like to thank all countries participating in the Global Coalition, especially the United States, the European Union and other countries outside the Coalition, for their efforts against terrorism and for their logistics and military support to Iraqi forces in the framework of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. We need help from the international community to rebuild the liberated areas as quickly as possible. As a result of the war on terrorism, other Iraqi governorates have faced the suspension of reconstruction projects and development opportunities. That needs to be included in the reconstruction campaign.

We see in the liberated cities many suffering women and children. We called on the international community to actively participate in the donor conference that will be organized in Kuwait early next year. We would like to thank Kuwait for all its efforts to support Iraq and to relieve the burden that the displaced have had to carry.

Furthermore, we attach great importance to freeing our society from the culture of hatred, murder and isolation disseminated by Da'esh. We are working to counter the effects of these practices. We need the international community, through our foreign partners, to assist us in form of consultation and financial investment. Once again, we call for partnerships with companies in our friendly countries in investing in the areas of the economy, energy, housing, transportation, health, and the building of hospitals and schools. We are providing a legislative environment conducive to attracting companies and investors.

I would like to express Iraq's thanks to its armed forces for the sacrifices they have made. These armed forces have fought and continue to fight against Da'esh, whether they be forces of the Peshmerga, the army, the police or anti-terrorist forces. Indeed, Da'esh was unable to control the south of the country — it controlled only Mosul and Salah al-Din. However, the people of the south also participated in the struggle against Da'esh in Salah al-Din, Mosul, Anbar, Najaf and all other provinces, including Kirkuk and Diwaniyah. The

people of the south of Iraq participated in that historic battle against terrorism, sacrificing their own lives.

I would like to express our thanks to the Iraqi people for that sacrifice. I am very grateful to all parties, including the Peshmerga, the popular mobilization forces and anti-terrorist forces. We hope that we will

be able to achieve peace, security and prosperity, both economically and socially, for all States and peoples. We hope to obtain cooperation at all levels and in all sectors to achieve a world that is free of terrorism and corruption.

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.